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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 000415

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y - CORRECTED COPY: CORRECTED ADDRESSEES

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2034/04/29
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHSA](#) [MOPS](#) [DJ](#) [SO](#) [BE](#)
SUBJECT: BELGIAN SPECIAL FORCES REQUEST USG ASSISTANCE FOR POSSIBLE
COUNTER-PIRACY OPERATION

REF: IIR 6 807 0211 09; 09 BRUSSELS 588 (NOTAL)

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DERIVED FROM: Derived from previous message.

1.B (S) ACTION REQUEST AND SUMMARY.B B The deputy
commander of the
Belgian Special Forces Group met with U.S. officials in Djibouti on

April 29, to convey requests for U.S. military assistance to
support a possible 50-man deployment off the coast of Somalia,
related to negotiations to effect the release of the "Pompei",
hijacked on April 19 by Somali pirates.B A 9-person advance team
from the Belgian Special Forces Group is currently embedded at the
French air force base in Djibouti, and the Belgians do not/not seek

to transit aircraft, cargo, or troops through U.S. facilities at
Camp Lemonier.B However, Belgium requests:B intelligence support
(e.g., imagery of the "Pompei" and analyses of Somali piracy); a
U.S. naval platform to support the deployment of a 50-man strike
force off the coast of Somalia; and use of U.S. facilities or naval

ships for training.B B B Post will continue monitoring the Belgian
Special Forces' presence in Djibouti, and welcomes any guidance on
official responses to Belgium's requests for USG assistance.B B END
ACTION REQUEST AND SUMMARY.

12. (S/NF) DCM, OSC, GRPO chief, and representatives of the U.S.
Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) and of Camp
Lemonier, met on April 29 with Major Wim Denolf, deputy commander
of the Belgian Special Forces Group.B Denolf was accompanied by
another member of the Belgian Special Forces Group (Peter, last
name unknown).

BELGIANS ABOARD VESSEL HIJACKED BY SOMALI PIRATES

13. (S) Denolf said that the Government of Belgium had dispatched a
9-person group to Djibouti, as part of an (advance) "observation
team" that would prepare for possible deployment of "a detachment
to support the ransoming process or do some kind of intervention"
related to the April 19 hijacking by suspected Somali pirates of

the "Pompei" (ref A).B Two Belgian citizens were among those hijacked aboard the "Pompei," which was in the vicinity of two other hijacked vessels (including the "Indian Ocean Explorer"). According to Denolf, "negotiations" were in progress, with developments being monitored daily.

14. (S) The Belgian Special Forces team was currently using the French air force base (Base Aerienn 188) in Djibouti, for accommodations and training, and had also secured access to the Port of Djibouti through the French military.B (NOTE.B The French Navy has a de facto dedicated pier at the Port of Djibouti.B END NOTE.)B According to Denolf, Belgium was not/not seeking to deploy any aircraft in Djibouti in support of this operation.B While Belgian forces could use firing ranges in Djibouti under the control of the French, the only U.S. facility they sought to use in Djibouti was Camp Lemonnier's "shoot house."

15. (S) Denolf asserted that the GOB had coordinated the Special Forces Group's deployment in Djibouti through the Djiboutian Embassy in Brussels, and that President Guelleh was aware of the Group's presence.B Among French forces, only the commanding officer of French forces in Djibouti--General LeFort--and a handful of other French officers were aware of the Belgians' true mission. Belgian participation in a previously scheduled annual May 9-10 training exercise with French forces in Djibouti provided cover for the Belgians' presence, Denolf said.B He added that if additional Belgian forces were needed, their deployment to Djibouti could be explained as Belgium seeking to add "more realism" to the joint training exercise.

REQUESTS FOR USG ASSISTANCE

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16. (S) Denolf specifically requested USG assistance in three areas, noting the possibility of seeking an MOU with the USG on the following:

a.B Intelligence-sharing:B tactical information on the location of the "Pompei," but also general information on Somali piracy (modus operandi, structure of pirate groups, etc.).B Intelligence products could be passed in either Brussels or Djibouti, he said, acknowledging that due to lack of a Belgian Embassy in Djibouti, the Belgians were using secure space provided by the French. (NOTE.B Products for foreign disclosure to the Belgian Special Forces Group should therefore also be releasable to France.B END NOTE.)

b.B B Naval platform capable of supporting a 50-person strike force off the coast of Somalia:B Denolf noted Belgium's lack of means "to support foreign intervention."

c.B Training:B Belgian Special Forces requested use of Camp Lemonnier's "shoot house", as well as U.S. naval platforms to practice "embarkation/disembarkation".B If the naval platform (see "b." above) were available, Belgian Special Forces sought to use it for "acclimatization."

17. (S) COMMENT.B Embassy officials stressed the need for Belgian forces to coordinate with select senior Djiboutian principals, in order to avoid difficulties with host country officials.B The presence of third-country national troops in Djibouti (other than French and U.S. forces on their respective bases) can be a sensitive issue for Djiboutian authorities, who cite Japan's meticulous preparations in advance of the deployment of counter-piracy destroyers and P-3C aircraft to Djibouti as a model.

(NOTE.B Japan sent numerous MOD and MFA delegations to Djibouti,

signed a bilateral SOFA agreement in Tokyo with Djibouti's foreign minister, opened separate MOD and MFA liaison offices in Djibouti staffed by TDYers, and provided nearly \$10 million in development assistance to the Government of Djibouti--prior to deploying any troops or military assets to Djibouti.B END NOTE.)B B Insufficient coordination with Djiboutian senior leadership by Italy (which lacks an embassy in Djibouti, but which recently transitted over 120 troops, numerous aircraft, and 2 frigates in Djibouti), has prompted the Djiboutian Chief of Defense, General Fathi, to complain formally about third-country national troops operating from Camp Lemonier.B While the Belgian Special Forces Group is operating from a French base, and will therefore not/not be based at the U.S. base in Camp Lemonier, Embassy will discretely alert Djiboutian principals (e.g., the national security advisor and foreign minister) to the Belgians' presence in Djibouti--to promote

transparency with the host of the only U.S. military base in Africa, and to preempt any Djiboutian concerns that Belgian forces may be clandestinely using U.S. facilities.B END COMMENT.
SWAN

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